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The Feminine in the Structure of the Arabic Language: An Analytical Semantic Study

المؤنّث في بنية اللغة العربيّة (دراسة دلالية تحليلية)

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Abstract: *This research aims to shed light on the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language including its letters and diacritics, utterances and structures to pinpoint the deep role of feminine signs and semantics in the structure of the Arabic language. This study is on a mission to show that the feminine in Arabic is not only one of its major pillars and most authentic landmarks, but it also profoundly exhibits its strength and beauty. The study also seeks to explore the clear harmony between the Islamic Sharia and the Arabic language, as mainly reflected in the structures, connotations and use of the feminine in Arabic. The researcher underscores the need for further research on the role of the feminine and its signs and features in the formation of the Arabic language, so as to highlight the interesting research horizons of this direction of linguistic studies.*

Keywords: *Feminine, Arabic, Woman, Structure, Semantics*

الملخص : يهدف في هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على المؤنّث في بنية اللغة العربيّة، في حروفها وحركاتها، وألفاظها وتراكيبها، لِما لمسنا من دور عميق لعلامات التأنيث ودلالاته في بنية هذه اللغة، للدرجة التي ترقى إلى أنْ تكون ركنًا كبيرًا من أركانها، ومعلمًا أصيلًا من أهمّ معالمها، وسرًّا عميقًا من أهم أسرار قوّتها وجمالها. ونسعى_ أيضًا_ إلى الإشارة إلى ما انكشف لنا من انسجام واضح بين الشريعة الإسلاميّة واللغة العربيّة؛ مستندين إلى أدلّة بيّنة واضحة من غير الاعتماد على البعد العقائدي والدينيّ لكوننا مسلمين. وداخلَنا إيمان عميق بالحاجة إلى مزيد فحص لدور المؤنّث وعلاماته ومعالمه في تكوين هذه اللغة، وبخاصّة لِما لا نزال نلمسه بين الفينة والأخرى بسبب التفاعل معَ هذه اللغة، ولِما نراه من علامات على تلك الآفاق البعيدة لهذا المنحى من الدراسات اللغويّة، ونرجو أنْ يكون هذا البحث محطّة في هذا الطريق.

كلمات دلالية: المؤنّث، اللغة العربية، المرأة، البنية، الدلالة

1. Introduction

Extensive research has focused on the study of the issue of masculinity and femininity the Arabic Language, exploring its depths and features, such as

Al-Farra', Al-Asma'i, Ibn Al-Anbari, Ibn Kisan, Ibn Jinni, and Abu Al-Batakat, among others (Barakat, 1988, pp. 6-7). This is not surprising since this is an integral issue not only for its linguistic necessity, but also for its social and cultural realizations, and for man and woman are the two indispensable pillars of human life and are the key to human life and its greatest secret. Therefore, this research seeks to provide an in-depth exploration into the special and distinctive role of the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language, especially in light of the Arabs' belief in the special position and influence of women throughout the ages, not to mention that the issue of the feminine and the related issues of women continue to take centre stage in humanity's attention.

The study also intends to depart from looking at language through the communicative dimension between people, or the direct scientific-cognitive dimension, to offer a further insight into the other deeper linguistic dimensions of the feminine phenomenon in Arabic. The study aims to shed light on the role of the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language, and the reliance of this language on the secrets of the feminine in highlighting its strength, beauty, and eloquence. The study holds that the feminine plays a major role in the structure of the Arabic language and indicates a special place for the feminine in the existence of this vital language. This study also strives to show the great harmony of the feminine status in the Arabic language and Islamic Sharia. The researcher of this study used the descriptive, analytical approach through which he reflected on and researched the feminine in the Arabic language, gathering evidence, citing referencing, and making comparisons where necessary.

Language involves a collection of sounds issued by a group of people while doing their work and communicating with each other. It is interesting to note that the first human linguistic communication was between a male and a female, between Adam and his wife Eve, and this is a nice and expressive sign. Just as life would not have proceeded without the masculine and the feminine together, so language would not have existed without man and woman interacting with each other. Therefore, this research takes its focus on the feminine, given it is one of the most important issues included in the social dimension, and on which human interaction is based. Barhouma (2002) observes that the issue of masculine and feminine has long enjoyed what many issues of the Arabic language have not received in terms of study and classification.

However, this study does not deal with the feminine in Arabic in the way many ancient Arab writers dealt with the issue of masculine and feminine, such as Al-Faraa', Al-Asma'i, Ibn Sallam, Ibn Skeet, As-Sijistani, Ibn Al-Anbari, Abu Musa Al-Hamedh, Ibn Shakir, and Ibn Jinni, among others. This study,

however, seeks to explore the secrets revealed by the feminine in the folds of the Arabic language, and the extent of its influence in it, by linking between meaning and structure (Barakat, 1988).

Therefore, the feminine deserves to be thoroughly investigated, unlike those who view the issue of femininity as thorny, turbulent, and ambiguous with the masculine (see, for example, Barakat, 1988). Rather, the feminine exhibits one of the masterpieces of linguistic construction, and I see that it reflects traditions, attitudes and sentiments, resonates with the nation's spirit and identity, and bears the connotations of its civilization and heritage, and perhaps some of its secrets.

This research will show that those who accuse the Arabic language of having a male bias and demand a neutral language that represents the sexes in half failed to see the beauty and centrality of the feminine in the structures of the Arabic language and how it underscores the themes of partnership, reverence and appraisal ascribed to the woman in the Arab Islamic culture.

2. Methods

This study followed the descriptive analytical approach in reflecting upon, researching and providing an in-depth analysis of the study subject, along with making comparisons between different views where necessary and verifying and attributing statements and sources. The focus of this study was placed on probing the concept of the feminine in Arabic and its various structural and semantic relationships and establishing the linkage between them and the purpose and original mission of language. The study was keen to reflect on and scrutinize those deep laws specific to the feminine, based on the premise that language is built on systems and laws, which are not subjected coincidence or randomness, but they rather emanate from social, cultural and moral values.

For purposes of the research, the study sample was drawn from a broad range of illustrative data of the phenomenon of the feminine in Arabic, rather than being limited to a specific sample as typically done in applied studies. This is because the objective of this study is different from that of traditional applied studies, for the researcher was more interested in making observations of any linguistic manifestation that has a bearing on the Arabic feminine. Therefore, the collection of data was the result of nearly ten years of observation, teaching and research in this phenomenon, which were later compiled, analyzed and presented in this research.

3. Results and Discussion

Some researchers find it difficult to distinguish the feminine from the masculine in language and some orientalists went to argue that femininity and masculinity are among the most ambiguous structures of grammar (Barhouma, 2002). Perhaps ignorance of the rules of the feminine in the Arabic language

contributed to the confusion of the task of distinguishing between the femininity and masculinity, and defining the feminine including its qualities and characteristics. The truth is that we see that the natural gender differs a lot from the grammatical gender in other languages, unlike the Arabic language. In fact, the feminine and masculine system disappeared from some languages, such as Persian, and gender lost its significance as a grammatical classification, and only traces of the old system remained from the pronouns, as is the case in English (Barhouma, 2002). Perhaps the system of masculine and feminine has been scattered and exaggerated in other languages; for instance, in the Burmese language, there are fourteen divisions (Hijazi, 2007). There are languages that do not differentiate at all between masculine and feminine, such as the Uralic Altaic languages (As-Sijistani, 1997).

In Arabic, the case is different, but obviously the distinction between the masculine and feminine indicates one of the laws of God, as aptly stated in the Quranic verse, "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer." [Surah An-Nisa, verse 1.] The two following sections will delineate these markers and methods of the femininization in the Arabic language.

Markers and Methods of Feminization

As-Sijistani (1997, p. 33) observes that “The first thing in eloquence is to know femininity and masculinity in nouns, verbs, and epithets by analogy and narration, and to know femininity and masculinity is more necessary than knowing declension", and we have seen the unmatched efforts that the Arab scholars have made to explore this issue. Ibn Sidah (1996, p. 57) holds that some Western scholars have admitted this, as Bloomfield points out that “the classifications of gender in most Indo-European languages do not agree in anything in the practical world”, contrary to what is seen in the Arabic language. The following two sections shed light on the markers and methods of feminization in the Arabic language.

a. Marked Feminization Markers

Marked feminization markers are two: the feminization *ta'*, both *fatha* and *ta' marbuta* (literally means tied ta'), and the 'alif' with its two types: the alif *mamduda* and the alif *maqsura*, and each of them has secrets and subtleties; one of the mysteries of the *ta' marbuta* is that in the case of a pause [sukun] on it, we have a *ha'* which leaves a sense of comfort and tranquility; for example, when we pronounce the name of 'Allah', and this gives a feeling of comfort, as God breathed His soul into man. It feels as if this *ha'* derived such serenity from His

name when pausing, giving peace and tranquility on the honorable feminine *ta'*.

The *ta'* marbuta in the Arabic language is distinguished by this feature, which involves turning it into a 'ha' when pausing, but in some other Semitic languages, such as the Assyrian and the Abyssinian, the ta' remains the same in the cases of the connected speech and the pausing, although there is no phonemic relationship between the *ta'* and the *ha*.

This is the first path of feminization in the Arabic language, and therefore it is really strange what we see in some fields, especially the scientific ones, that the terms of address related to the woman are not appropriate for her, for example, calling her alustaḏ ad-doctour Khadija [Professor Khadija], mudeer aṣ-ṣarika Aiṣa [company manager Aiṣa], and alqaḍiyah Sawsan [Judge Sawsan], and Huda an–na'ib fi albarlaman [member of parliament Huda], using the masculine vocative. It is important to note that this is a derogation of women's rights, privacy and politeness with her, and in order for us to feel this, say to a girl: kaifa ḥaluk? [How are you?] as if addressed to a male, and sure you would clearly see her resentment and denial, as there is no one who accepts this matter. Therefore, it is necessary to be in harmony with the rules and system of the language in using the feminine and its conditions.

As for the unfounded claim that the Arabic language oppresses women in five things, as it calls using negative feminine epithets: qaḍiyah [knockdown], naibah [calamity], dahiyah [cunning], muṣibah [misfortune], and hayyah [snake], it is a flimsy and naive myth, for the Arabic language is full of figurative speech, and therefore the context determines the intended meaning of the word without the slightest ambiguity or confusion, and this is the nature of language. For instance, the sentence 'hawa alwalad min fawq aš-šaʒarah' [the boy fell off the tree], and you have only the meaning of 'hawa' as 'fell' in mind, and you say 'hawa filasteen fi fu'adi' [the love of Palestine fell in my heart], and only the meaning of 'hawa' love comes to mind. It never occurs to have the meaning of 'falling'. Shall we forbid the use of the word 'hawa' in the domain of love because it also performs the meaning of falling, which is not in harmony with the beauty and tenderness of love? Of course, not!

The same is the case with these words, when you say, 'Fatima qadiah jadida fi maḥkamat al-isti'naf' [Fatima is a new judge in the Court of Appeal], one can only think of this well-known virtuous meaning, and when you say, 'sawsan fatat našišatun hayyah mof'amah bilhaya' [Sawsan is an energetic, lively girl full of life], it will not cross to your mind the meaning of snakes when the word 'hayyah' is mentioned in this context. Therefore, this is how women should be addressed, as al-ustadah al-doctorah, an-na'ibah fi albarlaman, and this is how we - also - are graciously responding to the commandment of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to treat women kindly. There is no doubt that it is

good to address her in what suits her femininity, privacy and politeness with her.

The feminine *alif* is distinguished by its presence in the waqf 'pausing' and the waṣl 'connected speech', as the non-feminine *alif* changes its status between the two, e.g., the *alif* in the word 'ṣa [stick] is absent in connected speech and is replaced by the nun, and this *alif* appears only at pausing, or if it is connected with the ('al). As for the feminine *alif*, as in the word 'kubra' [greatest], it is always present and maintained in all cases in pausing and connected speech and whether it is connected to 'al or not. This leads us to notice the permanent presence of the feminine, despite the possible absence of other elements in the structure of language, and this indicates the authentic role of the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language, and that there is no language without the full and permanent presence of the feminine, just as there is no continuity of human life without the woman.

b. Unmarked Feminization Markers

Both men and women have their own distinctive characters. If the feminine is singled out for something that the masculine does not share with it, then it is without the ta' marbuta, such as ḥā'ḍ [menstruating], nahid [full-bosomed], safir [a woman who shows her face], and našiz [a woman who is disobedient] (Al-Farra', 1975). The distinction between masculine and feminine may be by making a word for the masculine and another word from another origin for the feminine, for example: 'ab and 'um [father and mother], ḏakar and 'untha [male and female], ɣulam and jariyah [male servant and maid], and in non-human entities, there is hiṣan and faras [a horse and a mare], and ḥimar and atan [a donkey and an ass]. The same is found in other languages such as English, e.g., son and daughter, and brother and sister (Abdel Tawwab, cited in Ibn Al-Anbari, 1996).

There are many feminine nouns that are known to be only for the feminine, even though they are not connected to a marked feminine marker, for instance, female names including 'Asma, Zainab, Sawsan, Nawal, Maha, Rim, and many, many more such words. These are the feminine words with an unmarked femininity, meaning that their femininity is clear and evident without a marked feminization marker.

Further, in the Arabic language there are well-known 'awzan' patterns that do not distinguish between masculine and feminine, and this means that the diversity in the Arabic language in this regard goes in every direction, as there are:

1) Feminine words only.
2) Masculine words only.
3) Common words for both masculine and feminine.

It is strange to see those who accuse the Arabic language of a proclivity to masculinity, and they may be prejudiced against it and/or unaware of those remarkable features of femininity in the Arabic language, for the masculine and feminine are partners in this language, just as they are partners in human society, and it enhances the belonging of the females and males to the nation, and such markers and subtle features and secrets of Arabic confirm that.

Thus, the Arabic language appears in a beautiful balanced image that indicates harmony between the linguistic, intellectual and social components of the Arabic-speaking nation. This harmony within the linguistic structure confirms or echoes the complementarity between men and women according to the Arab and Islamic concepts.

We see the splendor of this deep harmony and partnership in many main words, where we see them masculinized or feminized, for example, such as raqabah [neck], ḏahab [gold], 'asal [honey], misk [musk], dir' [shield], salam [peace], sabeel [way], silah [weapon], and sūq [market] (Ibn Al-Anbari, 1996; Ibn Sida, 1996). Each of these words has a meaning and a place, in addition to the partnership in some well-known Arabic patterns, e.g., fa'il and fa'ul, and others. The Arabs describe a man and a woman with the same word, as they say: rajul rab'ah [a man of moderate height] and imra'ah rab'ah [a woman of moderate height], and rajul ṣarurah and imra'ah ṣarurah [a man or a woman who did not perform the pilgrimage], etc. (Al-Farra', 1975).

Feminine Utterances and Special Structures

Knowing the masculine and feminine structures in Arabic is integral to the knowledge of grammar and syntax in Arabic, such that failing to know the distinct utterances and structures of feminine and masculine or confusing between them would be indicative of poor knowledge of the Arabic language. The feminine is deeply cherished in the Arabic language, both in its utterances and in its structures, and the one who scrutinizes the Arabic feminine will clearly notice this. The following section seeks to point this out.

a. Feminine Singular Words

There are expressions specific to men, common in their space that women do not utter, (Barhouma, 2002). There are other words that are specific to women and used by women only, and these matters proceed in common linguistic conventions, without seeing an error in use, and perhaps sometimes without apparent or direct reasons.

The two words 'man' and 'woman' are two words that explain each other, and neither of them is meaningless without the other (Al-Rafi'i, 2000). They are combined by the word 'al-insān' [a human being], which is said to males and females (Ibn Al-Anbari, 1996), and how beautiful these combinations are! Just as a human being's needs and survival are not complete without both man and

woman, language comes to embody this and reflect it in its constructions and words. Arabic constructs words specific to the masculine and others specific to the feminine, for example, ɣulam and jariyah [male servant and maid], šayẖ and ajūz [old man and old woman].

If we want to talk about feminine expressions in the Arabic language and the presence of the feminine in its structure, we will see a lot of that, for human organs have feminine names, such as 'yn [eye], uḏn [ear], iṣba' [finger], kaf [palm], faẖḏ [thigh], yad [hand], rijl [leg], qadam [foot], etc., (Ibn Sidah, 1996). According to Barhouma (2002), of the human organs, there are 49 masculine words, while there are 56 feminine words. The larger number of feminine words indicates the originality and status of the feminine, and even its exalted role in the Arabic language.

Quite remarkably, the Arabic language boasts many words specific to the feminine in a way that exceeds the words specific of the masculine. There are words that have a status in the Arabic language; these words are only feminine and are never masculinized, such as arḍ [earth], rīḥ [wind], nār [fire], šams [sun], and many others (Ibn Sidah, 1996). This is a matter that does not require effort to clarify, as we also see that there are many words specific to females, and that they outweigh the number of words specific to men. Examples of this are:

1. ibn [son] is only for the masculine, but for the feminine, Arabic has *bin* and *ibnah* (daughter) (Ibn Jinni, 2013).
2. iṯnān [two] for the masculine, but iṯnatān and ṯintān for the feminine.
3. alaḏīn [they] which is the relative noun that pertains to the male group, but for the female group, there is more than one word that corresponds to this word, namely, alawati, ala'i, alati (Ibn Aqil, 1985).
4. Demonstrative nouns, Arabic has word ḏa [this] for the masculine, but for the the feminine we see ḏat, ta, tah, tih, ti, ḏuh, ḏih, and ḏī (Ibn Aqil, 1985).

This superiority of the feminine is not limited to the denotative level of words, but goes beyond it to its semantic superiority. This is exemplified in the deep presence of the feminine in the masculine; we know that the plural of the word rajul [man] is rijāl [men], and the word [men] emanates from the meanings of solidity and strength. It is nice to note that there is also a plural for the word (rijāl), which is (rijalāt), using the sound feminine plural, so this presence of the feminine at the core of a linguistic structure belonging to the man suggests more masculinity, the word rijalāt is more magnificent, stronger and beautiful than the word rijāl [men]. Note here that the feminine increases masculinity in strength, solidity and heroism, as if this presence of the feminine tells that famous saying: Behind every great man is a woman! This suggests that the presence of women enriches the man, and even strengthens him and

increases his power, which further indicates that our language enriches and guards this great bond between man and woman, just as the religion of Islam and its law enrich and guard this bond, and this is how the Arabic word is in its denotative and connotative meaning.

Thus, the student of the Arabic language senses that distinction in the terms specific to the feminine, where the language allocates specific terms to the feminine with what did not happen to the masculine. Further, what is called the masculine is not exclusive to the masculine alone, but rather is a general ascription for the masculine and for language in general, while for the feminine is different from that, as it is originally specific to the feminine.

b. Feminine Special Structures

There are special structures that prepare speech for the feminine, even if it is not originally intended to be feminine, as these structures reflect a special honorary connotation for the woman. These clear formulas confirm what has already been shown so far in this research of the partnership and complementarity between the masculine and the feminine, in addition to the deep presence of the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language. For instance, the presence of feminine forms in the Arabic structures is frequent, such that Ibn Jinni (2003) saying that the hamza is the sister of the ha', and the ra' is the sister of the lam, the ta' is the sister of the dal, and the jīm is the sister of shīn. Note that he did not say 'the brother of' Likewise, the titles of the chapters of grammar books are feminine, such as kana wa aẖawatuha [kana and her sisters], inaw a aẖawatuha [inna and her sisters], and ẓanna wa aẖawatuha [ẓanna and her sisters]. Note that Arabic did not say '…and his brothers'. There is more than can be counted, which indicates a special significance in favour of the presence of the feminine in the ancient grammarians' ways of speaking, methods and structures.

The structure of the verb with the feminine ta’ appears remarkably, as the Holy Qur’an has feminized the verb with the unreal feminine that is connected to the verb or separated from it (269) times, as in the Quranic verse "fama rabiḥat tiʒaratuhum' (so their commerce was profitless) (Al-Baqarah, Ch. 2, verse 16), and masculinized the verb mentioned with it (57) times, as in the verse 'fa min ja'ahu mawiẓah min rabbihi' (so whoever has received an admonition from his Lord) (Al-Baqarah, chapter 2, verse, 275). This indicates the great presence and position of the feminine in the language of the Noble Qur’an, and therefore in the Arabic language. Likewise, the Noble Qur'an feminized the verb with the broken plural connected to the verb or separated from it (264) times, as in the verse 'qalat al'rāb amanna' (The desert Arabs say, "We believe".) (Al-Hujaraat chapter 49, verse 14), while the verb is masculinized when mentioned with it (65) times, as in the verse 'fa'in kaḏabuka fa qad kuḏiba rusul min qablika' (Then

if they reject thee, so were rejected messengers before thee,) (Al-Imraan, Ch. 3, verse 184). Barhouma (2002) points out that the total number of the feminine places of the feminized verb in the Holy Qur'an reached (617) places, while the places of the masculinized verb did not exceed (193).

It is no secret that the Arabic language makes the feminine itself into degrees, so the real feminine differs from the unreal feminine; the real feminine is the one that gives birth or lays eggs (Ibn Sidah, 1996), but the unreal does not give birth or lay eggs, and so the real feminine affects the language more than the unreal, where the verb must be femininized with the real feminine whether it is an apparent noun or a pronoun, for instance,

- faṭimah ʒa'at Fatima came
- ʒa'at faṭimah came Fatima

It is not permissible here for the feminine ta' to be absent, which indicates the strength of the influence of the real feminine. However, if the feminine is unreal, the effect is less, for example, ašraqat aš-šams or ašraq aš-šams [the sun rose up], for Arabic allows using the feminine ta' with the verb or not using it.

Feminization Secrets, Connotations and Shadows

Ibn Jinni called for probing the depths of the language's words and searching for their secrets and essence. He cautioned against memorizing them naively or standing at the surface meanings of scales of words, as this is considered an insult to the language (Ibn Jinni, 2013). In light of this, the following two sections deal with the secrets and connotations of the feminine in Arabic.

a. Connotations and Purposes of the Feminization

Life is feminine, and without it, bodies would not act, nor would people be known; and heaven is feminine, and with it the righteous are promised, and for it messengers are sent (Al-Munthiri, 1968; Al-Tha'albi, 1983). The woman was the first sign of the onset of life and its resounding launch after that and without interruption. Even if the masculine Adam was the launcher of human life, the female Eve was life's starting point and its extension. The more consistent a woman is with her reality, the more influential she is in building society, just as the feminine has a profound influence on the structure of the Arabic language. We see the profound effects of the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language, whether it is in the diacritical marks, vocabulary, structures or styles, which we highlight in the following two sections.

1) Diacritical Marks and Vocabulary

A woman's voice is faster than a man's voice, and we see her influence faster in many matters than a man's. Therefore, she is the key to influence, as

she facilitates things and fulfills needs, so her presence is a reason for comfort, ease and smoothness.

We see that effect in the Arabic word riḍā' [a breastfeeding woman], with using kasra with ra', and if the feminine is present, by the feminine ta' marbuta, then a fatḥa is placed on ra' and so it becomes raḍā'ah [breastfeeding] (Al-Askari, 1996). This indicates that the presence of the feminine ta' led to ease, as the fatḥa is easier than the kasra, as is commonly known.

We also see that in the letter that precedes the feminine marker, whatever its type, in the diminutive, the fatḥa is used, not the kasrah. For example, the diminutive form of the word šaʒarah [tree] is šuʒairah [bush] using fatḥa with the letter 'ra', although the general rule is to use kasra after the 'ya' for words of four letters and more (Ibn Hisham Al-Ansari, 2004). Even if the feminine does not end with a feminine marker, and the feminine is intangible, the letter after the 'ya' is not used with a kasra, but with a fatḥa, as in the diminutive (zaynab) which zoyaynib, with a fatḥa on the letter following the ya', not a kasra. This reinforces the observation that the presence of the feminine leads to facilitation, as it is known that the fatḥa is the easiest among the diacritical markers.

Also, even if the feminine noun was devoid of the feminine ta', and it was a triliteral verb, the ta' must be returned to it, for example, the diminutive of the noun dār [house] is duwayrah [small house], as if it were seeking to enhance respect for women, in every aspect, for the feminine ta' is also untouched, just like the feminine *alif*.

The feminine *alif* in particular is a diptote for simply being present in any noun (Hassan, 1993), and this is a consideration, honour and reverence for the feminine. The presence of the feminine is wide in various fields in the Arabic language, with regard to the feminine and others, such as ʿulamā [scholars] and Zakariya [Zakaria] which are words that include the feminine *alif*, although they are not feminine.

The feminine ta' is a reason for richness and luxury, so the words like raḥḥāl, fahhām and ʿllām are well-known hyperbolic forms, which indicate abundance. If we add the feminine ta' marbuta to the word, it increases its signification of abundance and exaggeration, for the word ʿallāmah is more indicative than the word "ʿallām" and the word fahhāmah is deeper than the word fahhām, and the word raḥḥāllah is superior to the word raḥḥāl.

It is striking to notice that the letter šīn is silent in the word ʿšr [ten] when referred to the feminine, so we say, ʿšr nisā [ten women], at the time when the šīn is used with a fatḥa when it is for men, as we say, ʿšratu riʒāl [ten men] (Al-Jouhari, 1998). This is the pleasant and light difference between the two words, which is the diacritical marker on the letter šīn in the masculine number, and its silence sukun in the feminine number. In this, it is a reflection of the characteristic of the strength and movement of the 'man', and the tenderness

and femininity of the 'woman', for tenderness is closer to the sukun, and strength is closer to movement. We also see this in the words ʾḥad and iḥdā [one], so we say ʾḥad ʿšr raʒul (eleven men), and iḥdā ʿšrata imrʾah [eleven women].

If we examine words and expressions, we would see, for example, that the word alʿarab [the Arabs] is a feminine word, for we say, alʿarab alʿāribah and alʿarab alʿarbā (Ibn Sidah, 1996). One can clearly see the feminization of many honourable and lofty words, as the predominant in the Holy Qur'an was the feminization of the messengers, for the feminization verses were (26) verses, while the places of masculinization did not exceed seven verses (Barhouma, 2002).

This strong presence of the feminine is not surprising in the Arabic language, as al-kalimah [the word] is like the mother and it is divided into a noun, a verb and a letter, and these three are masculine, while their mother is feminine. Also, al-ʒumlah [the sentence] which is the source of structures is also feminine, as if it embraces all Arabic speech and its words with its masculine and feminine structures. Therefore, the beauty in the presence of the feminine in the structures is in harmony with the nature and identity of the Arabic language.

2) Compositions and Styles

We see beauty and perfection in the presence of the feminine ta' in the vocative for the father and mother, and that the feminine ta' compensates for the speaker's ya'. This presence came only for honour. When generally call on the father, we say ya ʾbi [O' father], but if we want to add more respect, reverence and honour, we say ya ʾbati, ya ʾbat, ya ʾbata, ya ʾumata (Ibn Hisham Al-Ansari, 2004), and thus we see how the feminine ta' is brought in to accomplish the task of giving more reverence and appreciation to the parents.

In light of all of this, it is strange to find one of the women's associations demand the Arabic Language Academy to pass a decision to remove the feminine ta' and the women's 'nun', in order to eliminate the differences between men and women and any so-called sexist differences in the Arabic language. These intended differences are the feminine ta' and the women's nun [nun anneswa], the kasra with 'ta', and the 'kaf' in addressing the feminine, because these markers engender a discrimination between the words ascribed to the masculine and those ascribed to the feminine, such that instead of saying qāmat zaynab [Zaynab stood up] you should say qām zaynab by dropping the ta', and instead of saying an-niswa qumna [the women stood up], you should say qāmū an-niswa , just as we say ar-riʒāl qāmu [the men stood up]. Is there anything more absurd than this?

These differences just highlighted are among the advantages of the Arabic language and are indicative of its beauty and the vastness of its vocabulary,

methods and richness. This is perhaps a rather difficult task, however, for those who lack sufficient appreciation for the beauty and splendour of difference, including this most beautiful difference between masculine and feminine, and between men and women.

b. Compatibility, Harmony and Prospects

Many scholars have been interested in probing the language, its sounds, letters, words, and structures, and searched for harmony between these various components and their meanings. In what follows, I attempt to highlight some noticeable aspects of this connection.

1) The Status of the Feminine between Society and Language

A man came to the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and said: O Messenger of God, who is the most deserving of people to my good companionship? He said: Your mother. He said: Then who? He said: Then your mother. He said: Then who? He said: Then your mother. He said: Then who? He said: Then your father (Al-Bukhari, 2001). But if the woman is a wife, then God Almighty commanded men to treat wives well, as in His saying: "And live with them kindly" [An-Nisa':19]. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, the Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, recommended the community, saying "Treat women well": "No one honours women except the generous, and only the mean one insults them." A woman was the first to embrace Islam in the Islamic nation in response to the Prophet, and she was the first to be martyred in the Islamic community at all. The woman is the one who gives birth to both men and women, and she is the one who gives birth to life, and the one who gave birth to Jesus, peace be upon him, and a man had no role in that.

There has been evident and significant confusion, resulting from the lack of attention to the status of women, and the lack of awareness of the status of women in our contemporary society, and in this case in our Arabic language, especially in light of the many baseless claims about Islam and the unfounded misconceptions about the Arabic language. It is unfortunate to see lies and unfounded claims published in some books and encyclopaedias globally.

The derogation of the status of women was not limited to general societal life. In fact, some efforts of Western researchers point to a kind of insult in the perception of the status of women in some languages. For example, the English language includes about 220 terms related to illegal sex for women, compared to 22 terms for men. Jespersen is one of the pioneers in the study of sexism in language, and he described English as a male language, while Gruber characterized English as a language of misogyny (Barhouma, 2002). Therefore, it is understandable that some foreign women writers had sometimes resorted to impersonating masculine names in their writings, because society did not

accept women entering the field of writing, for their language was linked to naivety and superficiality.

As for the woman in the Arab Muslim community, she has had a great experience in writing since ancient times. Nevertheless, some Arab women writers have been affected by such ideas, as Mai Ziadeh says: We need women who show the genius of men, and perhaps some female writers wrote in the language of men because this provides her - in her belief - the freedom to speak, and opens up horizons for her that would not be achieved if the narration was in a female tongue (Barhouma, 2002).

2) Deep Horizons and Distant Secrets

Contemplation of things is a necessity for the vitality of life in general, and that is why God created the universe with this enormous capacity. Yet, in order for man to live a normal life, he/she needs these horizons around him, above him, and beyond his sight, and even beyond that, in line with the Lord's saying: "Soon will We show them our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?" [Surat Fussilat 41:53]. Contemplation may call for imagination and assumption, and imagination and assumption often lead to revelations, creations and breakthroughs that have revived humanity and soared it into new horizons. It is not right for a person to denounce the human need for this broad human act of contemplation and other necessities of humanity.

Let us meditate and imagine, and nothing prevents us from positive imagination, for many ideas were just illusions, then they turned into facts, or even miracles, and what is wrong with beautiful imagination, if it leads us to beneficial and good things, or to the explanation of scientific phenomena.

Based on this, in this paper I try to shed light on the mysteries, illuminations, and subtleties that are related to the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language. Ibn Al-Tasturi says: "The matter of masculine and feminine does not follow a steady analogy, nor does it have a chapter that limits them" (1983). This means that more efforts are still needed to illuminate this precious field.

Look at the capacity of the sound feminine plural, as it is not limited to the feminine only, rather it is distinguished by its breadth and flexibility, such that it includes some words to have a sound feminine plural, despite the word being masculine, such as the plural of words ʿubaydah, usāmah and ʿikrimah [Osama, Ikrimah, and Ubaidah], which we cannot see in the sound masculine plural. The sound masculine plural is limited only to the masculine, and to rather specific types of the masculine. The woman, however, collects what a man cannot collect, and it suffices to refer to the bonds that woman makes through intermarriage between people, which indicates the presence of this characteristic specific to the woman in the structure of the Arabic language. This

means that the feminine is better able to gather the estranged ones in the tumultuous society of human life, as well as in the structure of the Arabic language. This indicates the proximity of this language to human life in general, and its ability to address them and reach their minds and hearts.

You wonder at such compatibility that you see between the nature of human society and the structure of the Arabic language, including the amusing compatibility between the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language and the feminine in human society. Note, for instance, the feminine name is originally a diptote noun, as if it is similar to the girl who has not yet engaged to someone, and the door to her engagement is closed, and she is limited to her fiancé, who becomes her husband, and she becomes his wife only.

The feminine diptote proper noun does not take a kasra except by linking it to al [the] or by *idafa* [possessive construct], which is not essentially fit for the proper noun at all because it is definite, and the definite cannot be further defined. Thus, the feminine proper noun remains diptote as long as it has these two qualities: being a proper noun and being feminine. The feminine proper noun, therefore, is never in the genitive case, i.e., does not take a kasra, but takes a fatḥa instead, which indicates ease and facilitation, never breaking or cutting, or say - if you want – indicates bliss and happiness! Take, for instance, the sentence sallama al-mudīr al-ʒāʾza li zaynaba [the manager handed the prize to Zainab], the feminine diptote proper noun 'Zainab' is a genitive with fatḥa instead of a kasra.

Thus, we can contemplate the deep meaning of the delicate feminine ta’ to reflect on these gentle meanings and associations. The feminine ta' comes as a beautiful title for the feminine, as it is a ta' when in connected speech, and it becomes a ha' when pausing – in the sukun. For example, muʿalimah [female teacher] is pronounced with a ha' at the end, which may indicate the woman's passionate, flowing emotions. When making the feminine ta' with a sound feminine plural, it is necessary to return to the original sound plural without the feminine tied ta', e, g., its plural is muʿalimāt with the addition of *alif* and *ta* to have the sound feminine plural. This is consistent with the well-known fact, which is that the woman was originally created from the rib of a man, and so she is also in language, which suggests the extent of presence of these facts in the forms and structures of language.

This is the feminine whom we call to probe its innermostness, and to search for more of its secrets, due to the large number of its subtle and interesting features, qualities and beauty. It contains the sweet and beautifying secrets that the beautiful feminine deserves.

Final Remarks

There is no meaning for a human life to be devoid of the male and the female together, as human life does not exist without both of them together, and

this clearly means that it is unreasonable for the existence of human life without the female. Therefore, the human language, closest to the human nature, is the one that includes a more prominent presence of the feminine. We have seen in this study the extent of the sophistication of the Arabic language and the special presence and clear contribution of the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language, imbuing it with further sophistication, strength and beauty.

This is also consistent with the Islamic religion, which did not start with the man alone, but with the man and the woman together. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, did not set out to initiate the call for Islam away from the woman, for he did not go to his first friend Abu Bakr, nor did he go to other men of Quraysh [his tribe], nor to the powerful, nor to the rich, or any of the people, but he went first and foremost to his wife Khadija, and he first came to her while he was most frightened and tense. This is an early indication of the role of the great woman in the message of the Islamic faith by ẖadīʒā comforting him and supporting him with words and deeds, and this is in itself a matter worthy of deep contemplation. The presence of a woman in a man’s life enriches and strengthens a man, as the common saying goes 'behind every great man is a woman'. We saw a similar role for the feminine in the structure of the Arabic language.

Conclusions

The contribution of this research comes in directing attention to the constructivist approach at its various levels, in order to capture those deep references to the status of the feminine and its impact on the Arabic language and its original role in its formulation and construction. It is known that the matter of this study revolves around meaning and significance, and this is an issue raised since ancient times, but what is new here is the attempt to interrogate the structure itself, at various levels, about its relationship to the feminine, and how the feminine contributes to creating this structure. It is remarkable that the feminine has a deep and real role in Arabic structure, whether it is in relation to the feminine, or also in relation to the non-feminine, which indicates a special and high value of the feminine in the Arabic language.

The truth is that we are inspired by the idea of making language and its emergence to the stage of life from the source of man himself; just as humanity came from a man and a woman, humanity cannot come from other than this path, so our idea revolves around this meaning; the feminine contributes to the existence of man and his appearance on the stage of life, and so it makes a significant contribution to the manufacture of this vital language and its prominence in the tongues of its speakers, and this indicates the particularity of this noble language chosen by the Lord of Glory, in order to be a vessel for the Holy Qur’an, and the language of this true religion.

The issue is not only a matter of feminization, but rather a broader, larger and deeper issue than that. It is an issue of the birth of language from the beginning, and then its brilliance and richness. It is that feminine that contributes to the creation and construction of this language, that construction in its broad general concept, and not only in the scope of what pertains to the feminine and its conditions and sections, and this would open other doors for research, study and excavation.

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